



POLICY MANUAL

OWEN COUNTY COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAM

Drafted: June 2006

MISSION STATEMENT

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) of Owen County is committed to making a difference in the life of a child through trained volunteers that are willing to donate their time to determine the best interest of a child that has entered the judicial proceedings for abuse and/or neglect.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Owen County CASA Program is to recruit and train volunteers to effectively represent the best interest of abused and neglected children in juvenile court proceedings. In CASA appointments, priority will be given to adjudicated CHINS and Juvenile Termination cases. Other court cases in which a child would benefit from a CASA will be considered on a CASA availability basis. CASA volunteers advocate for a timely permanency plan and make recommendations regarding appropriate rehabilitative and protective services to the Court.

THE NATIONAL COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAM

The first volunteer guardian ad litem program serving abused and neglected children was organized in 1977 in King County, Seattle, Washington.

In the following years, word of the success of the King County program spread like wildfire and similar programs were begun all over the United States.

Because some state statutes require the guardian ad litem to be an attorney, the term CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) was coined to denote volunteers from the local community who had been trained to serve as advocates for children involved in court proceedings.

In 1982, the National CASA Association, Inc. was established to serve as an umbrella organization for the growing number of programs in the country. National CASA provides information, technical assistance, research, training and hosts an annual national conference. Membership in National CASA is open to programs and individuals throughout the U.S.

ESTABLISHMENT OF CASA IN INDIANA

The growth and development of CASA/GAL in Indiana can be directly attributed to the efforts of the Indianapolis Bar Association, the American Bar Association, and Lilly Endowment through their 1982 initiation of the Law and Child Project. The Project focused attention on the statewide need for appointment of trained community volunteers and attorneys in child abuse cases. The 1982 Indiana Children in Need of Services statute did not require the appointment of CASA/GAL advocates in any case. The Project was designed to promote, develop, and implement county CASA Programs. Between 1982 and 1988, the Project initiated 26 county CASA Programs and instituted the Indiana CASA/GAL Association.

Indiana leads the nation with 67 of our counties having some type of Court Appointed Special Advocate Program in existence today. Law now requires a CASA or GAL appointed to represent the child in many types of abuse and neglect cases.

HISTORY OF THE OWEN COUNTY COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES

The Owen County Court Appointed Special Advocate program was established in 2004 as a Division of the Owen County Circuit Court under the guidance of the honorable Judge, Frank M. Nardi. The court had a growing concern for abused and neglected children appearing before the court without a voice of their own. Judge Frank M. Nardi then appointed Lori Thatcher-Quillen, Court Referee, as Director. Ms. Quillen selected Ms. Tina M. Morris as

Assistant and together they began to develop the Owen County CASA Program. Groundwork for the program was done voluntarily. Currently, the program is funded by County and State funds.

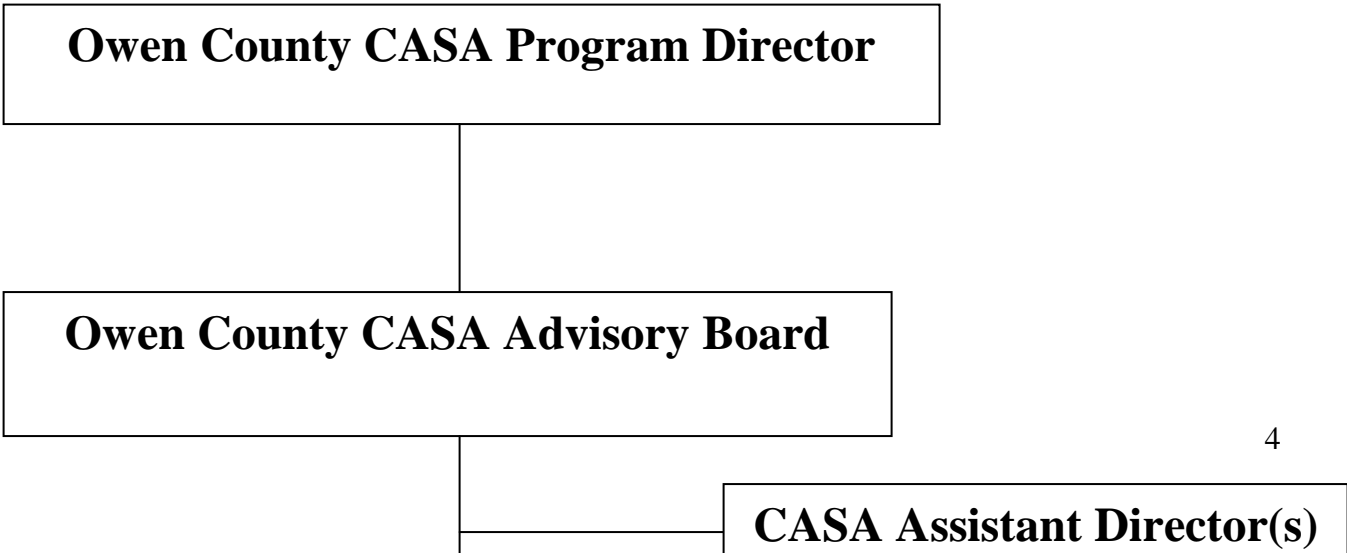
The Owen County CASA trained and certified its first six volunteers in the fall of 2005 and its next 4 volunteers one year later.

On July 1, 2005, the Indiana legislature made appointment of a CASA, GAL or attorney a requirement for every CHINS child. In order to attempt to comply with this requirement and to achieve certified status for the CASA program, Referree Quillen sought funds to hire a part time assistant.

STATE OFFICE AFFILIATION

- 1. The Owen County CASA Program operates in accordance with the Code of Ethics and the Program Standards of the Indiana Office of GAL/CASA.
- 2. Affiliation with the Indiana Office of GAL/CASA may be used only in accordance with the goals and purposes of the Indiana Office of GAL/CASA.

**Owen County CASA
Program Structure Chart**



CASA CODE OF ETHICS

Volunteers and staff of the Owen County CASA Program will abide by the Indiana GAL/CASA State Code of Ethics and all laws and regulations governing their activities. This Code of Ethics provides Indiana GAL/CASA programs and volunteers with guidelines for professional behavior and ethical conduct. The Indiana State Office of GAL/CASA shall not be held liable for the actions of affiliate programs or volunteers.

Conduct

1. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will uphold the credibility and dignity of the GAL/CASA concept by conducting all business in an honest, fair, professional, and humane manner.
2. Employees and volunteers of GAL/CASA programs will not use their authority inappropriately, nor condone any illegal acts or unethical practices related to their program or community.
3. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will not use their program relationship for inappropriate personal, professional or financial gain.
4. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will avoid any action that could adversely affect the confidence of the public in the integrity of the GAL/CASA concept.
5. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will not initiate, permit or participate in any *ex parte* communications with the judge outside the presence of the parties concerning a pending or impending proceeding.
6. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will not practice, condone, facilitate or participate in any form of discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, or mental or physical handicap.
7. GAL/CASA programs will take necessary steps to avoid conflicts of interest on cases. GAL/CASA programs will ensure that each volunteer exercises

independent judgment on behalf of a child and advocates solely for whatever is in the best interest of the child. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will resist influences and pressures that interfere with impartial judgment and will report honestly and impartially to the court on what is in the best interests of the child. In order to avoid conflicts of interest and even the appearance of impropriety, the GAL/CASA program shall not allow employees of the Court or Department of Child Services to serve as a volunteer. Foster parents and employees of service providers that provide services to the Department of Child Services also should not serve as volunteers absent special circumstances that are approved by the Director. A GAL/CASA program shall not appoint any volunteer to a case when the volunteer has prior involvement with a family or with the circumstances surrounding the case unless there is full disclosure of the potential conflict to all parties and any perceived or actual conflict is waived.

Confidentiality

1. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will respect the right to privacy of all individuals. GAL/CASA programs will maintain strict confidentiality of all information related to a case. GAL/CASA programs will take all reasonable steps to ensure that volunteers also maintain strict confidentiality. GAL/CASA programs will provide training to volunteers about confidentiality and will have volunteers sign a confidentiality statement and/or policy. Neither a GAL/CASA program nor volunteers will disclose confidential information relating to a case to any person who is not a party to the case except in reports to the court and as provided by law or court order.
2. Persons affiliated with GAL/CASA programs will not use confidential information obtained through their work with GAL/CASA for personal benefit.

Knowledge and Understanding

1. Individuals working in GAL/CASA programs as staff or volunteers must be trained in the court and child welfare systems; child abuse and neglect issues;

relevant state and federal laws; permanency planning and family preservation; cultural awareness; confidentiality and ethics; and the roles and responsibilities of a GAL/CASA volunteer. A GAL/CASA program that appoints volunteers in divorce/custody/visitation, paternity, juvenile delinquency, adoption, or guardianship cases must provide additional training in these areas.

2. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers must respect a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe and permanent environment that meets that child's best interests.

STATE OFFICE CERTIFICATION

13. GAL/CASA programs seeking certification from the Indiana State Office of GAL/CASA must operate in accordance with this Code of Ethics and the Program Standards of the Indiana State Office of GAL/CASA. Pursuant to I.C. 33-24-6-4, only GAL or CASA programs that are certified by the Supreme Court are eligible for funding from the State Office.

14. Affiliation with the Indiana State Office of GAL/CASA may be used only for purposes in accordance with the goals and purposes of the Indiana State Office of GAL/CASA.

COMPLIANCE

15. The Director of the Indiana State Office of GAL/CASA shall monitor compliance with this Code of Ethics in conjunction with the Indiana Supreme Court Advisory Commission on GAL/CASA.

EMPLOYMENT SCREENING

Employee screening is conducted much the same as volunteer screening. An application is filled out even when a resume is obtained. A file is begun on each candidate. The following background checks are conducted: Criminal, Child Abuse and Neglect (OFC), Sex Offender's Registry, references, and previous employers. A part of the application is a release of information to allow the background checks to be made. If one were to refuse to sign the release, he or she would not be considered for employment.

A GAL/CASA program does not accept applicants for staff or volunteers if they have been convicted of, or have charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, child abuse or neglect, or related acts that would pose risks to children or the program's credibility.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT

The Owen County CASA Program does not discriminate as to race, sex, religion, ethnic background, marital status, etc. In fact, we seek diverse employees from every walk of life and varied backgrounds. All positions advertised shall be inclusive and state that we seek diversity among the CASA Volunteers and program staff.

EMPLOYEE FILES

Employee files are kept in the Director's office. Any employee may verbally request to see their file at any time. Files may not be removed from the premises of the CASA Office. The employee may question information contained in the file and ask for corrections for any perceived misinformation. Each request will be considered by the CASA Director. Any employee who is not satisfied with the CASA Director's handling of file information may speak to the Circuit Court Judge about the matter.

CASA FUNDING AND BUDGETS

The Owen County CASA Program is funded by the state and county budgets and the Indiana GAL/CASA Grant to fund representation of CHINS and Juvenile Termination cases. All monies are held by the Owen County Auditor.

The major portion of the CASA budget comes through the regular county budgeting process. The CASA written budget is presented to the County Auditor in July. The first week of September, the CASA Director makes a budget presentation to the County Council. The county budget pays for salaries of personnel, office expenses, volunteer mileage reimbursement, and costs of volunteer training.

County budget monies are spent according to county policy using county claim forms. Claims are turned in to the auditor on specified days and checks are written by the auditor. The CASA program receives the checks and mails them to the appropriate parties or vendors. The CASA program maintains its own copy of the financial disbursements as well as copies of all receipts and bills.

INDIANA CASA/GAL GRANT

The State Grant is received in March or April each year. A second grant may be given in or after July. The grant monies are deposited in CASA-048-4000 fund held by the County Auditor. All claims are paid by county policy. The monies are spent only upon presentation of a claim approved and signed by the CASA Director which is forwarded to the County Auditor. The claims are then advertised and presented to the county commissioners for approval of payment. The CASA Office keeps a file copy of all expenditures.

With unsecured funds, a budget is only projected. As funds become available, opportunities for training (and their related costs), learning materials, etc. become a reality. Currently, our budget consists mainly of reimbursement of travel expenses and part time salaries.

There is a written budget and expenses are planned for as much as possible.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

COUNTY OF OWEN, INDIANA

POSITION: Court Appointed Special Advocate Program Director
DEPARTMENT: Circuit Court
WORK SCHEDULE: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., M-F
JOB CATEGORY: Program Director

DATE WRITTEN: July, 2000 **STATUS:** Part-time
DATE REVISED: May, 2004 **FLSA STATUS:** Non-Exempt

To perform this position successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed in this document are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. The Owen County CASA Program is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Incumbent is responsible for the day to day implementation of the Owen County CASA Program, with general duties to include (but not limited to) the supervision of volunteers; the recruitment and training of new volunteers; the assignment, review, and tracking of all assigned cases throughout the court process, and the administration of the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program.

DUTIES:

Program Administration

Works with the Owen County CASA Advisory Board to develop and implement policy(ies).

Directs the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program through both long-range and day to day planning.

Confers with Circuit Court Judge about program plans, progress, and problem situations.

Plans the budget for the program.

Volunteer Recruitment and Training

Recruits potential volunteers through community leaders, other CASA volunteers, and media releases.

Oversees the preparation and distribution of volunteer application packets.

Sees that criminal record checks and child abuse and neglect checks are run and references are obtained on each applicant.

Interviews each applicant.

Informs each applicant whether or not they are accepted into the program. Sends a letter to each applicant not accepted listing reasons for declining the application.

Provides a minimum of 30 hours of initial training for the volunteers and 12 hours continuing education hours annually thereafter.

Provides for training materials including National CASA Training Curriculum for each participant in CASA training.

Arranges for the new volunteers to be sworn before Circuit Court Judge.

Plans and conducts 12 hours of in-service training for current volunteers at least three times during the calendar year. In-service training includes taking CASA volunteers to the state CASA meeting the first Saturday in November each year.

Volunteer Management

Assigns CASAs to cases for the Court.

Prepares and submits the court order appointing the CASA.

Sees that copies of relevant information from the Court file are prepared for the CASA appointed to each case.

Obtains a signed certificate of case acceptance from the CASA.

Provides the CASA with all necessary forms he or she will need.

Sends letters/memos confirming the CASA appointment to the parents or guardians (or their attorneys) of the child(ren) involved in the case, to the Office of Family and Children and their Attorney.

Reviews and tracks cases by attending Court hearings, conferring with Office of Family and Children, reviewing Court files, and conferring with CASA volunteers.

Insures up-to-date, accurate, and thorough program files are maintained on each case.

Makes sure each volunteer is aware of all court dates.

Reviews all volunteer reports making sure they are clear, concise, and grammatically correct. If necessary, writes the report for the CASA with their collaboration, using the volunteer's own words and recommendations.

Files motions for continuance and obtains counsel on behalf of the volunteer if needed.

Supervises volunteers by providing technical and problem-solving assistance to each volunteer.

Offers support and encouragement to volunteers as they work on assigned cases.

Monitors the progress of each case.

Plans and conducts one volunteer appreciation event per year (dinner, reception, etc.)

Continuing Education

Continues to receive personal job-related education by attending CASA Directors' regional meetings, seminars, and clinics, and especially the State CASA Director's Conference.

Remains informed on current juvenile codes as they pertain to the program.

Community Responsibilities

Maintains good working relationships with other professional agency staff (attorneys, OFC case managers, mental health professionals, etc.).

Attends monthly meetings and is a member of the Owen County Child Protection Team.

Assists in planning and promotion of a countywide child abuse prevention event in April each year.

Conducts programs for community organizations upon request.

POSITION DESCRIPTION COUNTY OF OWEN, INDIANA

POSITION: Court Appointed Special Advocate Office Assistant
DEPARTMENT: Circuit Court
WORK SCHEDULE: 20 hours as arranged between Director and Assistant
JOB CATEGORY: Office Assistant
DATE WRITTEN: June 2006 **STATUS:** Part-time
DATE REVISED: **FLSA STATUS:**
The Owen County CASA Program is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Duties: Duties include general secretarial work such as answering the phone, making copies, mailing, filing, and computer file maintenance. Duties specifically include:

Prepares and mails volunteer application packets.

Prepares file for each volunteer applicant to CASA Program.

Processes criminal background checks with the Owen County Sheriff and child abuse and neglect checks with the Office of Family and Children.

Assists Director in preparing for CASA training classes.

Assists CASA Director with special events such as Swearing-in Ceremony, In-services, and CASA Appreciation events at whatever times the events occur.

Sends letters/memos confirming the CASA appointment to the parties in the case.

Begins file for each new CHINS in Owen County and aids in maintaining program files for each case.

Sends Court and OFC documents regarding their case to all CASA volunteers.

Aids volunteers in writing their court reports when needed.

Provides statistical data for the program and the Court by means of the COMET data base.

Helps all CASA volunteers in their cases by communicating for the CASA Program with the volunteers and by actually going on visits and/or interviews with volunteers.

Takes advantage of educational opportunities when offered.

CASA VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

The qualifications for a CASA volunteer are that s/he:

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Be a Resident of Owen County.
- Successfully pass screening, including:
 - *a written application,
 - *personal interview, three personal references and
 - **Criminal, Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Office of family and Children, and Sexual Offender record checks.

*Note: Each applicant will be evaluated on an individual basis regarding any history of abuse or emotional problem for which they received treatment. In addition, the volunteer interview will be used to screen out appropriate judgment and values or the lack of verbal skills necessary to perform as an effective volunteer for children.

**Note: This program does not accept applicants if they have been convicted of, or have charges pending for, a felony or misdemeanor involving a sex offense, violent act, child abuse or neglect, acts of dishonesty or related acts that would pose risks to children or to the credibility of the CASA Program.

- Make a commitment of service to a child and his/her case for at least (1) one year.
- Have time to devote to training sessions, investigations and follow-up of a case assigned.
- Have the ability to work with a child, family members and professionals using tact, concern, and basic human relations skills.

- Have the ability to communicate verbally and in writing, making verbal and written reports to the court, to the program coordinator, and to other persons as needed.

The Owen County Court Appointed Special Advocate shall be expected to:

1. Abide by the Indiana GAL/CASA Code of Ethics
2. Complete a thorough investigation of all the facts in order to arrive at an objective and impartial opinion of what is in the child's immediate and long-term best interests. This investigation will include:
 - a. Interviewing the child, parents, caseworkers, attorneys, relatives, friends, neighbors, foster parents, teachers, etc.
 - b. Researching information obtained from DFC records, school records, medical data, court records, and psychological reports.
3. Maintain written records of the case including contact log and notes of their contacts.
4. Confer with the program director as to any changes that may be needed, requested, or recommended concerning the child's status.
5. Submit a written report to the court outlining findings and recommendations.
6. Appear at all court hearings regarding the child to insure that all relevant facts are presented.
7. Maintain high standards of confidentiality of information pertaining to the case.
8. Advocate for the child's best interest.

9. Monitor the case as long as the child is under court jurisdiction, or at least one year, to insure that appropriate services are being provided to the child and family and that an appropriate permanency plan is in place.
10. Visit the child as often as necessary to observe whether the child's essential needs are being met. A monthly visit is suggested as a minimum.
11. Participate in all conferences and meetings involving the child.
12. Participate in on-going in-service training to improve advocacy skills.
Twelve
(12) hours are required each year after the year of New CASA Training.
13. Notify the CASA Program immediately of any criminal charges.

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT and SUPERVISION

The Owen County CASA program director shall strive to be easily accessible, and make every effort to provide guidance to the volunteer. The volunteer should confer with the CASA Director during the course of the case to update the office staff and to discuss major decisions and actions. The CASA office staff can offer suggestions as to procedure and contact people. The CASA Director is available to intervene with agencies when necessary and to make visits with volunteers when appropriate. The CASA Office staff shall be a primary location for all records and any needed conferencing.

REIMBURSEMENT OF VOLUNTEER EXPENSES

Volunteers may be reimbursed for mileage and long distance telephone calls associated with their assigned cases. The director will submit the appropriate claim forms to the Circuit Court and Owen County Auditor. Mileage will be reimbursed for travel to visit the child or children in the case assigned the CASA volunteer. Miles traveled to interview others in the child's life may also be claimed, as well as expenses to attend CASA state meetings and local in-service programs. Miles must be claimed on forms provided by the Owen County Auditor and each volunteer must keep track of the odometer reading of the vehicle (s) driven.

Owen County will pay for long distance phone calls made in the course of the volunteers' work. Phone bills must be brought or faxed to the CASA office and copies will be turned in to the auditor. Any personal information may be marked through with black marker, however, the only people with access to a volunteer's phone records would be the State Board of Accounts. To be reimbursed for any phone call over thirty minutes in length, the volunteer must explain to the CASA Director that call's length.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Volunteers, employees, CASA Advisory Council Members, etc. shall not be assigned to a case in which the volunteer:

1. Is related to persons involved in the case.
2. Is employed in a position or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
3. Is biased by prior knowledge of circumstances or facts regarding the case or persons involved in the case.
4. Would benefit financially from their position or from business done with the CASA Program.
5. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will not use their program relationship for inappropriate personal, professional or financial gain.
6. GAL/CASA programs will take necessary steps to avoid conflicts of interest on cases. GAL/CASA programs will ensure that each volunteer exercises independent judgment on behalf of a child and advocates solely for whatever is in the best interest of the child. GAL/CASA programs and volunteers will resist influences and pressures that interfere with impartial judgment and will report honestly and impartially to the court on what is in the best interests of the child. In order to avoid conflicts of interest and even the appearance of impropriety, the GAL/CASA program shall not allow employees of the Court or Department of Child Services to serve as a volunteer. Foster parents and employees of service providers that provide services to the Department of Child Services also should not serve as volunteers absent special circumstances that are approved by the Director. A GAL/CASA program shall not appoint any volunteer to a case when the volunteer has prior involvement with a family or with the circumstances surrounding the case unless there is full disclosure of the potential conflict to all parties and any perceived or actual conflict is waived.

In addition, no foster parent licensed directly through the Owen County Division of Family and Children may serve as a Owen County Court Appointed Special Advocate. A foster parent licensed through another agency may serve as a CASA volunteer as long as that agency is not providing services to any party of that case.

VOLUNTEER CASE FILES

The volunteer must maintain complete and up to date records on each assigned case. Notes must be written legibly and shall be clear and accurate. The volunteer file shall include all motions, petitions, orders, and reports pertaining to the case as well as contact log, personal notes and all other file in a secure location to prevent a breach in confidentiality. The CASA volunteer

must also guard against information stored on a home computer or sent by e-mail being seen by family members or personnel at their place of work. All information obtained by the volunteer about their case is confidential.

Volunteer files must be returned to the program office when the case is dismissed or if the case is reassigned to a different CASA.

CASA PROGRAM OFFICE CASE FILES

The CASA Program Director will maintain duplicate case files in the program office. These files must contain all petitions, motions, orders, reports, and docket sheets pertaining to each case as well as correspondence between CASA Office Staff and the volunteer, OFC, family members, or other agencies involved. Each case file is to be kept in a locked file cabinet in the locked interior office of the CASA program. Access to these files is given only to CASA office personnel, volunteers or other parties provided under the laws of confidentiality.

When a case has ended the CASA Volunteer shall return his or her file to the CASA office. The file shall be separated as follows. All personal notes of the volunteer and CASA office staff and any information that may not be recorded in court documents shall be sealed in an envelope marked with the Cause Number and family name. The sealed records are kept in the CASA office indefinitely. All other documents are shredded. The Court retains all legal documents forever on hard copy. The OFC also maintains all their records of each case on hard copy forever.

ACCESS to LEGAL COUNSEL

The Owen County CASA Program shall operate with access to legal counsel when needed. When necessary, funding for legal assistance will come from the Pauper Attorney Fund of the Circuit Court or the CASA Budget Fund #048-4000

VOLUNTEER REPORTS

Volunteer reports shall present an unbiased, factual, and historically accurate record. Volunteers must turn in reports to the Program Director for each hearing in a timely manner, one week before the proposed hearing. The Program Director will communicate deadlines for report submission to the volunteer. Copies of all reports filed with the court shall be maintained in the volunteer and program office files.

CASA volunteers shall submit all written Court reports to the Program Director. The director will confer with the volunteer when changes in the report are necessary and will make no changes as to content without the volunteer's consent. All recommendations to the Court must be discussed with the CASA Director prior or submitting the report to the Court. Volunteers may meet with the director and write the report in the CASA Office.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT

It is the duty of any CASA program staff, volunteer, or advisory council member to report suspected child abuse and child neglect. In fact, Indiana law requires every citizen to report suspected abuse. The Child Abuse Report number is 812-829-2281. Someone is available at the Department of Children's Services office to take calls about abuse during working hours (8 AM to 4:30 PM) every day. After hours the number to call is 812-829-3856 . This call will go directly to the Sheriff's Department and the worker "on call" is paged. The DCS Caseworker will then call you to take the report. If a CASA volunteer or program staff makes a report to DCS, they should also make the CASA Program Director or Assistant Director immediately aware of the report.

RESTRICTIONS on PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT of CASA

The CASA volunteer should not become inappropriately involved in a case by engaging in activities which could jeopardize:

- the safety of the child
- the objectivity of the CASA
- the integrity of the program;
- or activities which are likely to result in conflict of interest or expose the program or the volunteer to criminal or civil liability.

To aid in restricting personal involvement, volunteers are not allowed to invite the children on their cases to their homes or to present the children with large amounts of money or expensive gifts. Volunteers may give small gifts to the children. If any CASA volunteer wishes to make large donations, whether gifts or money, it must be cleared with the CASA Director. CASA volunteers are encouraged to give their time to the children, not material things. Owen County CASA volunteers are discouraged from transporting children and families to appointments or to extra activities.

The CASA volunteer is the advocate for the child. The volunteer is prohibited from taking a child home, providing direct services to the child such as therapeutic counseling, legal advice, or arranging for placement. The CASA volunteer may

advocate for such things to occur, but does not directly take over any of the case management.

SUPERVISION of VISITS

The Owen County CASA Program prohibits CASA volunteers from providing supervision of visitation. A CASA may observe visitation under the supervision of DCS or other service providers.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Transportation by volunteers in personal vehicles of children or other persons during the course of performing their duties and responsibilities is prohibited.

GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Upon receipt of a grievance or complaint regarding the behavior or actions of a CASA volunteer, the CASA Program Director shall conduct an independent investigation of the allegations. Upon completion of the investigation, the Program Director shall meet with the CASA volunteer to discuss the complaint and the findings of the investigation.

The Program Director shall take one of the following actions to resolve a grievance/complaint:

1. Determine that the grievance/complaint warrants no further action.
2. Determine that the CASA volunteer requires the assistance of the Program Director to develop and execute a plan to resolve existing problems.
1. Determine that the CASA volunteer should be removed from the case and petition the court to do so.

DISMISSAL OF A VOLUNTEER

Appropriate grounds for dismissal from the CASA Program include:

1. The volunteer takes action without program or court approval which endangers the child or is outside the role or authority of the CASA program.
2. The volunteer violates a program policy, court rule, or law that compromises the program's credibility or puts the program at risk for litigation.
3. The volunteer demonstrates inability to effectively carry out CASA duties.
4. The volunteer fails to complete required ongoing training.
5. The volunteer falsifies information on the volunteer application or misrepresents facts during the screening process.
6. Abuse or neglect of a child is substantiated against the volunteer.
7. The volunteer receives two Driving Under the Influence citations. One such citation will result in the volunteer not being allowed to transport anyone on their case load.

Dismissal of a volunteer would occur only after a thorough investigation of the alleged problems by the CASA Director. The Director would interview the CASA volunteer and any other necessary party about alleged problems, and discuss the decision with the Juvenile Court Judge. The CASA Director would also personally notify the volunteer about the decision to dismiss them from the program. A follow-up letter will be sent to the volunteer and a copy retained in their personnel file.

CASA LEGALLY DEFINED AND POSSIBLE ROLES

1. Definition of Volunteer:

“CASA” is defined legally in Section 31-9-2-28 “Court Appointed Special Advocate”: means a community volunteer:

- (1.) who has completed a training program approved by the court;
- (2.) who has been appointed by a court to represent and protect the best interest of a child; and
- (3.) who may research, examine, advocate, facilitate, and monitor a child’s situation.

The primary focus of the Owen County CASA Program is to represent abused and neglected children through the CHINS process including Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption of the CHINS child. The program does take other assignments from time to time with permission of the Court.

CHINS/ DELINQUENCY

The CASA is a party to the proceedings and has all rights of parties under the Indiana Trial Rules of Procedure. The CASA has the right to notice of pleadings, hearings, and administrative panel reviews; right to civil discovery and to subpoena witnesses and tangible evidence; the right to present and cross-examine witnesses in hearings; and the right to appeal.

The CASA shall research, examine, advocate, facilitate, and monitor a child’s situation. The CASA shall appear at all hearings, administrative reviews, case conferences, etc. as the advocate for the child’s best interest.

The CASA serves until the juvenile court judge enters an order for discharge.

CUSTODY

The CASA shall be considered an officer of the court for the purpose of representing the child’s interests.

The CASA shall research, examine, advocate, facilitate, and monitor a child’s situation. The CASA shall appear at all hearings, administrative reviews, case conferences, etc. as the advocate for the child’s best interest.

The CASA serves until the Judge enters an order for discharge.

TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

The CASA is a party to the proceedings and has all rights of parties under the Indiana Trial Rules of Procedure. The CASA has the right to notice of pleadings, hearings, and administrative panel reviews; right to civil discovery and to subpoena witnesses and tangible evidence; the right to represent and cross-examine witnesses in hearings; and the right to appeal.

The CASA shall research, examine, advocate, facilitate, and monitor a child's situation. The CASA shall appear at all hearings, administrative reviews, case conferences, etc. as the advocate for the child's best interest.

The CASA serves until the juvenile court judge enters an order for discharge. However, following a decision in a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) case, the CASA may remain on the corresponding CHINS case until the wardship is terminated.

ADOPTION

The CASA may ask questions about the adoptive family, voice concerns, inquire about and become involved in plans for introducing the child to the family, and obtain information about any post adoption financial assistance available if the child has special needs. The CASA shall provide the Division of Family and Children with input regarding the proposed adoption plan, review the plan, and report to the court as to whether the plan is in the child's best interest. After the adoptive family is selected, the CASA should continue to visit the child in the adoptive home to monitor progress.

WHEN YOUR CASA CHILD IS IN CRISIS:

This plan is intended for very serious incidences involving your CASA child including:

- a. attempted suicide
- b. has been in a serious accident or injury
- c. running away

1. SHOULD YOU BE PRESENT, CALL 911.
2. OTHERWISE, CALL YOUR CASEMANAGER AT OFC.

3. Case Managers will arrange needed services.
4. You do not have the authority to seek medical care for your children.
5. Call the CASA Director.
6. Depending on the situation, you may go to the hospital, etc. Keep in touch as much as possible by phone. Ask the CASA Director about further intervention.

Always have these phone numbers with you when on CASA business:

CASA Office		829-5030
Department of Children's Services		829-2281
Child Abuse/Neglect		829-2281
	after 4 p.m.	829-3856
CASA Director		829-4142
	Cell	828-7391
CASA Assistant Director		859-4341
	Cell	317-363-5186

OWEN COUNTY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Owen County CASA Advisory Council shall serve as an advisory board for the CASA Director. The members shall act as a sounding board for program management, publicity, recruitment, and other ideas for which the director may seek input. The council may also generate ideas for the CASA Program and may facilitate in any area discussed. The final authority for any decision affecting the CASA Program rests with the Owen County Circuit Court Judge. The CASA Director shall meet with the Judge to discuss issues addressed by the council. If necessary the Judge may be asked to meet with the council, and the Judge may request a meeting of the council at any time.

The CASA Advisory Council shall consist of six community members. They will be chosen for their varied backgrounds and varied lengths of terms of service as volunteers. The council members shall be chosen by the CASA Director. Their term of service shall be two years. Three council members shall rotate off every year.

The Council shall meet quarterly, unless more frequent meetings are necessary for a specific project. A quorum shall consist of four members. The CASA Advisory Council shall elect a member to serve as President and one to serve as Clerk of the council. The President shall preside at all meetings. The Clerk shall keep minutes of the meetings and shall notify the members of meetings scheduled. Each year the CASA Advisory Council shall decide when the meetings should occur that year.

An agenda shall be provided for each CASA Advisory Council Meeting. The agenda shall consist of items contributed by both the CASA Staff and advisory council member.

CASA Advisory Council Member Job Description

General Expectations:

1. To become knowledgeable about the organization in order to make informed decisions.
2. To recruit possible CASA volunteers and Advisory Board members.
3. Each Advisory Council Member shall serve for two years with half the council rotating off each year.
4. Each member of the CASA Advisory Council shall try to attend as many regularly scheduled quarterly meetings as possible.
5. Each member shall keep confidential all issues related to any CHINS case discussed.
6. Each member shall act with the knowledge that any decision made must be approved by the Owen Circuit Court Judge.
7. Each member should be willing to share their opinion of the topics discussed to aid the CASA Director and Court in making decisions.
8. Each member shall feel free to bring up issues relating to the CASA Program, the children being served, service providers, etc.



Owen County CASA Volunteer Application
P.O. Box 86, Spencer, IN 47460

Date: _____

The CASA Program does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, age or disability in its use of volunteer advocates.

Name: _____ **S.S.#** _____

Address: _____

Birthdate: _____ **Telephone #** _____

Cell # _____ **Email Address** _____

Emergency Contact: _____

Emergency #: _____

Previous names (including maiden if applicable): _____

Previous addresses: _____

Children's names and

ages: _____

**Spouse's
name:**_____

**Spouse's place of
employment:**_____

Your employment: _____ **Full or Part-time:** _____

**Work
Address:**_____

Work phone: _____ **May we call you at work?** _____

Brief description of duties: _____

Past employment: _____

Valid Indiana Driver's License #: _____

Educational Background: Highest level attained:_____

Major areas of study:_____

Volunteer/Community Experiences: _____

Experience with children/youth: _____

Hobbies and interests: _____

How did you learn about our program?: _____

Have you had personal experience with any of the following? If so, please explain:

***Dept. of Children Services (Previously known as Office of Family & Children):**

Juvenile Court: _____

Foster Care: _____

Other agencies offering services to children: _____

As a CASA volunteer, you will work directly with the Owen County Dept. of Children's Services. Any substantiated abuse or neglect will disqualify you from becoming a CASA volunteer.

What is your motivation for interest in the CASA Program? _

Thirty hours of training is required. Times will be set depending on participant's schedules. Each training session will last approximately two hours. Please to list the best times for training sessions for you :

State statute also requires that every three to six months review hearings be held to determine the status of the case. Hearings can be held any day during the week between 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., but are usually on Monday afternoons. Will your work or personal schedule allow you to attend these hearings? _____

Have you ever been convicted for any violation of laws other than a minor traffic violation? _____

If yes, please explain: _____

(A conviction record will not necessarily bar you from acceptance as a volunteer unless the offense is a conviction of a sex crime or relates to the abuse or neglect of a child.)

References: Please list three people for references. Two should be professionals, clergy or employers, etc. No relatives please. Reference letters are mailed to these people, so complete addresses are necessary.

Thank you.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #: _____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #: _____ Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #: _____ **Relationship:** _____

To the CASA Director:

I understand that by submitting this application, I authorize inquires to be made concerning my suitability as a Court Appointed Special Advocate. The information requested in this application and information that might otherwise be obtained will be used only for the purpose of determining my suitability as a volunteer. All information will be held in strict confidence.

I realize that the Owen County Court Appointed Special Advocate Program may conduct record and computer checks through law enforcement (Owen County Sheriff), Child Protection Agencies (Department of Children's Services), Sex Offender Registry, employers, and/or other appropriate sources. I also realize that if I refuse to sign this release I will not be allowed to serve as a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Having carefully considered the above statements, I allow the CASA Office to enquire about my suitability to serve as a Volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate.

Applicant's Signature_____

date_____

**OWEN COUNTY CASA PROGRAM
P.O. BOX 86 SPENCER, IN 47460
812-829-5030**

APPLICANT REFERENCE FORM

**Your name has been submitted by
_____ (volunteer applicant) as a
reference for application to the Owen County Court Appointed Special
Advocate Program. While filling out this reference form, please keep
in mind that the Applicant will be working with abused and/or
neglected children, their parents, Owen County Department of
Children's Services, and the Circuit Court. With that in mind we wish
to be certain that volunteers are well qualified emotionally and are of
high character. CASA's are required to make decisions as to what they
feel is in the best interest of the child and relay those decisions to the
Court and families after a thorough investigation of the case. CASAS
spend time with the children getting acquainted and learning what the
child wants, and they serve as a positive role models for the children
and their families.**

**It will help us a great deal if you will carefully consider the above
described situation when answering the following questions to the
best of your knowledge. Please be advised that your response will be
kept confidential. Forms need to be returned in the self-addressed
stamped envelope provided as soon as possible. Thanks for your help.**

**Lori Thatcher-Quillen
CASA DIRECTOR**

.....

.....

1. How long have you known the applicant? _____
2. What is your relationship with the applicant? _____
3. What do you know about the applicant's character and honesty?

4. How would you describe the applicant's temperament? _____

5. Does the applicant tend to follow through to complete projects or tend to have a lot of unfinished projects underway? _____
6. How does the applicant interact with children? _____

7. Does the applicant tend to be accepting of personal and ethnic differences? _____ If no, please explain _____

8. To your knowledge, does the applicant have or ever had a problem with drugs or alcohol? _____
If yes, explain. _____
9. To your knowledge, has the applicant ever been arrested for a criminal offense? _____ If yes, explain. _____
10. Would you trust the applicant to care for your children alone? _____ If no, explain. _____

11. To your knowledge, was the applicant ever a victim of child abuse or neglect? _____ If yes, explain: _____

12. To your knowledge, has the applicant ever been a victim of domestic violence or abuse? _____ If yes, explain: _____

13. Does applicant still associate with the abuser? _____

14. In your opinion would the applicant make a good advocate for abused and/or neglected children?

15. Use this space for any additional comments you wish to make about the applicant. These comments should be limited to the applicant's appropriateness or inappropriateness to advocate for children.

DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____

Please use the self-addressed stamped envelope to return this form to:

**Owen County CASA Program
P.O. Box 86
Spencer, IN 47460**

I can be reached at the office (812) 829-5030, if you need to discuss the applicant and do not wish to put your information in writing. However, please fill out the reference form to the best of your ability with information you are willing to put in writing. Remember, this information will remain confidential. Thank you for your help.

**Lori Thatcher Quillen
CASA Director**

TO: Owen County Sheriff's Department
ATTENTION: Sheriff

FROM: Lori Thatcher Quillen , Director
Owen County CASA Program
P.O. Box 86
Spencer, IN 47460
812-829-5030

The following people require complete background checks for the purpose of determining them to be suitable to work with the CASA Program.

1. Name:
Address:

Phone: 812-
Date of birth:
SSN:

I have enclosed the signed Release of Information form. Thank you so much for this important service to the CASA Program. Please let me know if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Lori Thatcher Quillen, Director
Owen County CASA Program

TO: Owen County Department of Children's Services
ATTENTION: Director

**FROM: Lori Thatcher Quillen , Director
Owen County CASA Program
P.O. Box 86
Spencer, IN 47460
812-829-5030**

The following people require complete background checks for the purpose of determining them to be suitable to work with the CASA Program.

**1. Name:
Address:**

**Phone: 812-
Date of birth:
SSN:**

I have enclosed the signed Release of Information form. Thank you so much for this important service to the CASA Program. Please let me know if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

**Lori Thatcher Quillen, Director
Owen County CASA Program**

STATE OF INDIANA)
) SS:
COUNTY OF OWEN)

IN THE OWEN CIRCUIT COURT

SPENCER, INDIANA

IN RE THE MATTER OF:

CAUSE NO.:

ORDER APPOINTING COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE

Comes now the Court and finds in this cause that the appointment of Court Appointed Special Advocate is desirable to represent and protect the best interest and safety of the child(ren) in the Cause named above:

IT IS THEREFORE, ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED:

1. That _____ is appointed Special Advocate for the child(ren) named in this proceeding and shall act in that capacity as an officer of the Court for the purpose of representing the children's best interest and safety.
2. Upon presentation of this Order to any agency, hospital, organization, school, person or office, including of the Division of Family and Children, mental health agencies, pediatricians, psychiatrists, police departments, the aforementioned shall permit the Special Advocate and the Director of the Greene County CASA program, Beverly Haynes, to inspect, discuss with appropriate person, and/or copy any records, reports, x-rays, photographs or other matters relevant to the case and the children, including protected health information, and any reports of examinations of the child(ren)'s parents or other persons responsible for the child(ren)'s welfare, without consent by the child(ren) or his/her parents according to IC 31-33-2-5, and IC 31-33-15-2 and IC 31-39-2-9.
3. The Court Appointed Special Advocate assigned to this case shall maintain any information received from any such source as confidential and will not disclose the same except in reports to the Court and other parties to this cause.
4. The Court Appointed Special Advocate shall appear at all hearings or proceedings scheduled in this cause and assure proper representation of the children at said hearings.
5. The Court Appointed Special Advocate and the Director of CASA Program shall be notified of any hearings, staffings, investigations, depositions or other proceedings concerning the child and shall be notified prior to any action taken on behalf of the children by any party.

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS _____ DAY OF MONTH, YEAR

JUDGE FRANK M. NARDI

OWEN CIRCUIT COURT

